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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002042

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR PRM AND NEA
BAGHDAD AND CAIRO FOR REFCOORDS

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: KING ABDULLAH HALTS PLAN TO CLOSE RUWEISHED
REFUGEE CAMP

REF: A. AMMAN 297

[B](#). 03 AMMAN 5550

[C](#). 03 AMMAN 7798

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: King Abdullah has put a halt to GOJ planning to transfer refugees from UNHCR's Jordan-Iraq camps to another site in the "no-man's-land." An additional 53 Iranian Kurds formerly resident at the UNHCR camp near Ramadi, inside Iraq, arrived at the Jordan-Iraq border last week, bringing the total population of Iranian refugees seeking asylum in Jordan to 190. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) The King has put a halt to a GOJ plan to close UNHCR's two Iraq refugee border camps. The first is located at Ruweished, inside Jordan ("Camp A" aka "Ruweished camp") and the second is between the Jordan and Iraq checkpoints at the Karama-Trebil crossing (the so-called No-Man's Land camp). During meetings with UNHCR's Jordan and Iraq missions, UNHCR Jordan Representative Sten Bronee told visiting PRM/ANE officers February 24 that he had heard that the GOJ intended to close Ruweished camp and No-Man's Land camp, which the international community established in 2003 to assist refugees fleeing Iraq, and move the 879 remaining refugees to a new camp that Jordan would establish at a more isolated location within the Iraq-Jordan no-man's-land 72- km south of the Karama-Trebil crossing. Prince Rashid, who heads the Jordanian humanitarian organization that provides camp management and health services for UNHCR at the border, confirmed the GOJ's intent in separate meetings later that day. He explained that the implementation plan was the same one that Jordanian border officials had proposed after suicide car bombers targeted U.S. and Jordanian security installations located near the No Man's Land camp in December (ref A).

[1](#)3. (C) Rashid conceded that he had failed to persuade the GOJ to relocate the No Man's Land camp residents to Ruweished Camp, or to identify an alternative site where UNHCR could provide the No Man's Land camp residents the same level of protection and assistance available at the Ruweished camp, following the December attack. He predicted that Interior Minister Samir Habashneh would move quickly to consolidate the Ruweished and No Man's Land camp residents at the new site on the border, explaining that any action perceived as creating another long-term refugee population, or setting a precedent that could encourage additional Palestinians to enter Jordan, is highly unpopular. COMMENT: Jordan has a strict policy of local integration of all refugees which is reflected in its various agreements with UNHCR. Its past decision to grant nearly all of its Palestinian refugee population citizenship is tied to its 1948-1967 administration of the West Bank, and is not considered to be a precedent by the GOJ. This policy has prompted Habashneh to attempt to close Ruweished repeatedly over the last two years (refs B-C). END COMMENT.

KING OVERRULES TRANSFER DECISION

[1](#)4. (C) However, subsequent USG engagement appears to have bought a stay for Ruweished camp. In quiet consultations with Royal Protocol Minister Rifai (strictly protect), Charge urged Jordan to reconsider its position, noting that relocating Ruweished residents to locations with clearly inferior protection conditions within the no-man's-land, or across the Iraqi border, could amount to a forced return against international practice that would be damaging to Jordan's image. He also reminded Rifai that Ruweished was built with donor funds that are unlikely to be offered to construct new facilities within the Iraq-Jordan no-man's-land, and argued that UNHCR and its service providers should determine whether this location would provide better protection and assistance conditions for refugees who are presently at the No Man's Land camp. Rifai informed the Charge March 7 that he had briefed King Abdullah of U.S. views, and that the King had instructed the Interior

Minister to halt work on relocating Ruweished camp.

15. (C) COMMENT: Although refcoord's subsequent discussions with UNHCR Jordan and Hashemite Charitable Organization patron Prince Rashid suggest the royal decision is being implemented, pressure to find a solution to the Iraq war-related caseload could still prompt the GOJ to consider relocations, particularly as Iranian Kurds formerly resident in the UNHCR Al Tash camp in Iraq continue to seek entry to No-Man's-Land camp. UNHCR Jordan believes an additional 53 refugees arrived this week, bringing the total number of Iranian Kurds living between the Jordan and Iraq border posts to 190. Moving forward with efforts to secure permanent settlement solutions will be key to continued GOJ patience. In order to preserve our influence over the GOJ on these matters, post requests that reference, even in private, not be made to a U.S. role in reversing Jordanian plans.

16. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

HALE